



AFRICA RIDING ADVENTURES TOURS

ETHIOPIA TRAVEL FACTS AND INFORMATION ON YOUR TOUR

Ethiopia, as large as France and Spain combined, has an area of 1,112,000 square kilometers. About 65 percent of the land is arable, with 15 percent presently cultivated. From the north and running down the centre are the Abyssinian highlands, to the west of the chain the land drops to the grasslands of Sudan, to the east to the deserts of the Afar. South of Addis Ababa the land is dominated by the Rift Valley Lakes. The main rivers are the Blue Nile, the Tekezze, the Awash, the Wabe Shabele, the Omo, and the Baro.

Population

The current population is about 70 million, making it the third most populated country in Africa.

Climate

There are two seasons: the dry season prevails from October through May; the wet season runs from June to September. Temperatures are determined by altitude, with highlands (including Addis Ababa) rarely exceeding 25° C. In the lowlands it can get considerably hotter exceeding 40°C, while in the Danakil Depression it can approach 60°C.

Topography

Ethiopia has an elevated central plateau varying in height between 2,000 and 3,000 meters. In the north and centre of the country there are some 25 mountains whose peaks rise over 4,000 meters. The most famous Ethiopian river is the Blue Nile (or Abbay), which runs a distance of 1,450 kilometers from its source in Lake Tana, to join the White Nile at Khartoum.

Government

Ethiopia is a Federal Democratic Republic made up of 9 regions, mainly based on ethnicity. The present government was reelected in May 2005 for a 5-year term.

Language

Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic state with a great variety of languages spoken in the country, of which there are 83 with 200 dialects. The main three languages are Amharic, Tigrigna and Oromigna. English is also widely spoken.

Electric supply

Ethiopia uses 220 Volts 50 cycles AC. Plugs are of two-pin.

Time and Calendar

Ethiopia is in the GMT + 3 hours time zone. Time remains constant throughout the year. Ethiopia still retains the Julian calendar, in which the year is divided into 12 months of 30 days each and a 13th month of 5 days and 6 days in leap year. The Ethiopian calendar is 8 years behind the Gregorian calendar from January to September and 7 years behind between September 11 and January 8.

Visa requirements

Visas are required for all visitors to Ethiopia and can be obtained from Ethiopian diplomatic missions abroad. Nationals of Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, United Kingdom and United States are now allowed to receive their tourist visas on arrival in Ethiopia at a charge of US\$20.

Airport Tax

There is a US\$20 departure tax for international flights (this may already be included in your ticket)

Currency

The local currency is the Ethiopian Birr, made up of 100 cents. Credit card facilities are growing throughout the country but not yet in all main cities. You can withdraw funds from cash machines at the Hilton and Sheraton hotels using visa and master card credit cards. You may also withdraw money with your credit card from tellers at these same locations but they may charge you up to 6% service fee. Please note that these services may not always be available and it is wise to always bring some cash with you.

Customs

Duty-free import are permitted for up to: 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars, 1/2 lb of tobacco, 1 litre of alcoholic beverages, two bottles of perfume. Visitors may export souvenirs with a value not exceeding Birr 500, although some articles (such as animal skins and antiques) require an export permit.

Health requirements

The possession of a valid Yellow Fever vaccination certificate is no longer mandatory but visitors coming from countries where Yellow Fever has been reported may be asked. Immunization for Hepatitis A and B, Tetanus, Typhoid, Meningitis, Rabies and Polio is recommended.

Malaria: in many sites malaria is not a problem because of the elevation - this is true of Axum, Gondar and Lalibela for example, but it can occur in Bahir Dar at the end of the rainy season and after unseasonable rains. Lowland areas along the Awash River, the Omo Valley, Rift Valley and Gambella are subject to malaria outbreaks. Chloroquine resistant strains have been identified in most areas. You should consult your doctor about whether you should be or not prescribed anti-malarial treatment. In most of the larger towns there are now private clinics, but these and local pharmacies may be short of drugs and medical supplies. In Addis Ababa there is a range of private hospitals and clinics.

Visitors should bring a simple first aid pack, which should include: different size plasters, antiseptic cream, anti-histamine cream and/or tablets for insect bites, sun barrier cream (while temperatures are moderate the sun is strong) and anti-diarrhoea tablets such as

Immodium for emergencies (they will not cure the problem but will control the symptoms). For your motorcycle trip you are strongly advised to take medical insurance inclusive of medical evacuation.

Altitude sickness: Addis Ababa lying between 2100-2500 meters above sea level is the third highest capital in the world, and new visitors may experience discomfort until they adjust to the altitude – symptoms can include shortness of breath, fatigue and insomnia.

Climate and Clothing

The dry season in Ethiopia lasts from mid-September to mid-June and the rainy season from mid-June to mid-September. There is also a small rainy season around February that lasts for a couple of weeks. However these time frames are nowadays indicative only. Like in the rest of the world the climate is also changing in Ethiopia and the rainy season may start or end before or after the above mentioned dates and although we make our outmost to give you the best advice and dates for your trip we can not be held liable for any weather changes that may affect it.

Because of the elevation, temperatures rarely exceed 25°C in most of the country, although in some of the lower lying areas (Awash, Omo and Mago parks) it can get considerably hotter.

In the Simien and Bale Mountains you will need warm clothes (temperatures can go below 0°C) and depending on the time of the year waterproofs.

Pack light clothes for the day time and a jacket or sweater for the evenings, and a good pair of walking shoes or comfortable sandals. On a cultural note - Ethiopians are generally modest dressers, and visitors should be sensitive about going underdressed (shorts, tank tops and bare backed) into places of worship. Shoes must always be removed before entering churches and mosques - for getting around sites like Lalibela with its many churches. Airline socks can be very useful!

Food

The Ethiopian national dish consists of injera, a flat, circular pancake of fermented dough made from a grain seed called tef, on top of which are served different kinds of cooked meats, vegetables and pulses. The sauces are generally spiced with berbere, a blend of herbs and spices (including hot peppers) which gives Ethiopian food its characteristic taste. Vegetarians should try "fasting food" (for devout Ethiopian Orthodox Christians fast days make up more than half the year; Wednesday and Fridays are fasting days), a colourful spread of salads, vegetables and pulses, devoid of all meat and animal products. One eats national dishes with the right hand (water for washing is usually brought to the table before the food is served), tearing off pieces of injera to pick up the "toppings". Addis Ababa now boasts of a wide variety of restaurants, and at hotels in tourist sites European style food such as pasta is always available.

Some Local Dishes and ingredients

Doro Alich'a - mild Ethiopian chicken dish

Doro Wat - A spicy Ethiopian chicken dish

Tibs Wet - A very spicy (and fatty!)fried meat dish from Ethiopia

Siro Wet-A Stews enlivened with " spicy mitin shiro"- a flavorful combination of ground beans, spices, and chilies used to season many foods.

Yekik Alich'a - An Ethiopian split pea dish, with a mild sauce.

Spiced butter -A recipe for clarified, herbed butter, a basic ingredient in Ethiopian cuisine
Berbere -A red-pepper based spice mixture, used in Ethiopian dishes

Drinks

Sparkling and still mineral water, along with soft drinks, are now available throughout the country. There are several brands of locally produced beer. Ethiopia produces its own wine and spirits, while imported spirits are also widely available. There are home made alcoholic drinks: tela (home made beer or ale), tej (wine made from honey) and kati kala (distilled liquor from various grains.)

Souvenirs

Many antiques cannot be exported and may be confiscated if found in airport searches. The National Museum in Addis Ababa can issue a clearance certificate.

Photographing

Outside Addis Ababa, generally only 100 ASA film is available. As a matter of courtesy, permission should be sought before photographing individuals and in many parts of the country, particularly among the ethnic groups living by the Omo River, people will demand a fee. In some sites (e.g. Blue Nile Falls and the church of Debre Birhan Selassie in Gondar) there is a charge for video photography.

Begging

Ethiopia's recent history of civil wars, famines and population displacement, along with poverty and under development, has created large numbers of destitute people, particularly noticeable in Addis Ababa. This is made worst due to the fact that begging in Ethiopia is culturally acceptable. Giving to beggars does not solve the problem and it is at your discretion to do so. There are many organizations which would welcome your support if you want to help.

Security

Ethiopia is generally a safe country, and Addis Ababa a safe capital city, but one should still take the normal precautions, avoiding unfamiliar areas at night and not carrying large sums of money in accessible pockets. It is advisable to beware of pickpockets operating in certain areas, skilled at identifying new arrivals. Other than that violent robbery and muggings are rare and generally visitors can tour the city day and night in safety.

Driving License

If you are not a national or resident of Ethiopia you will need an international motorcycle driving license or a temporary Ethiopian license to drive a motorcycle in Ethiopia - ***you can not drive a motorcycle with a car license.***

If you would like to get a temporary Ethiopian motorcycle license get in touch with us for more details.

The bikes

Don't forget to reserve your favourite bike for the trip with at least 2 months in advance. We need to prepare the bikes for your arrival. Please note that we will only give the KTM 525XC Desert Racing and the KTM 690 LC4 enduro to experienced off-road riders. These are very powerful bikes and if you do not have the experience you may seriously hurt yourself and destroy the bike.

Incidental Charges

If you are booked on a calendar tour or on an all/semi-inclusive package custom made tour, while staying at your lodging, costs you incur for phone calls, room service, laundry, and other special services are your responsibility. Please take care of these charges as soon as possible, either the night before or on the morning of departure, being mindful that your tour's departure is not delayed.

No Smoking please

Africa Riding Adventures Tours has a no-smoking policy on the support vehicle. Observance of this requirement helps assure the well being of all participants in the tour. We appreciate your cooperation.

Camping

If your tour involves camping we will supply all the equipment, food supplies and a cook. The only thing we ask you to bring is a sleeping bag and a torch. Don't forget to bring a warm jacket as well especially if you will be travelling to the Simien or Bale Mountains. These can be very cold at night with temperatures often getting below 0°C/32°F.

Fuel

Fuel is not yet widely available throughout the country. In some parts of the country we will have to buy it in the black market and in the most remote areas you cannot find it. In these cases we take spare fuel in the support car to re-fill the bikes as necessary. Pls note that we will ask you to reimburse us the fuel money at the end of the trip.

How much you will spend per day It will depend on your riding style, how much extra weight you carry, whether you're riding on or off-road, fuel availability, etc., but if you ride the entire tour at 17 Km/litre, 300 Km/day, fuel costs will be approximately 20 USD/day.

Riding Gear

Riding in Ethiopia is not the same as riding in Europe, States, Australia, etc. Roads are not as safe and there are many unpredictable obstacles on the way you may not be used to like domestic animals (donkey, cows, etc.). The use of a crash helmet is a legal requirement in Ethiopia and you will not be able to ride without one in any of our tours. We request our clients that at a minimum you wear a protective jacket and pants with protection fitted and motorcycle boots. It is recommended to wear a kidney belt, gloves and glasses. If you have a body armour bring it with you. Depending on the time of the year you are coming and your itinerary it can be very hot and with a body armour you have the freedom of riding without a protection jacket. Remember, we want you to have fun and get the most of the bike in as safest environment as possible.

You will need to bring your own gear. We have some some items that we can rent but in limited numbers and sizes. If you don't have your own gear or there's a particular item you prefer to rent from us get in touch beforehand and we will let you know what's available and what sizes.

... and finally, a bit of bureaucracy

I'm afraid this is something you also have to deal with in Ethiopia. Upon arrival we will ask you to fill and sign the following papers:

- Client information form
- Terms and conditions
- Tips for safe driving in Ethiopia
- Declaration of responsibility

If you bring these papers signed you will avoid spending too much time in our office. You can find electronic copies of all these in our website at the bottom of any of the calendar tour pages (e.g. www.africaridingadventures.com/calendar/ct1.html).

We will also need to get photocopies of your passport and national/international motorcycle-driving licenses. We will also ask you to take a copy of your insurance policy card so that in case of an accident we can make all necessary arrangements for you to be evacuated as soon as possible. These documents should accompany you through out your trip. Again if you bring photocopies of all these documents with you the bureaucracy will be cut to almost nothing and you can enjoy your day in town.

If you have any special requirements (either dietary or bike wise) pls let us know with enough notice so we can prepare for it.